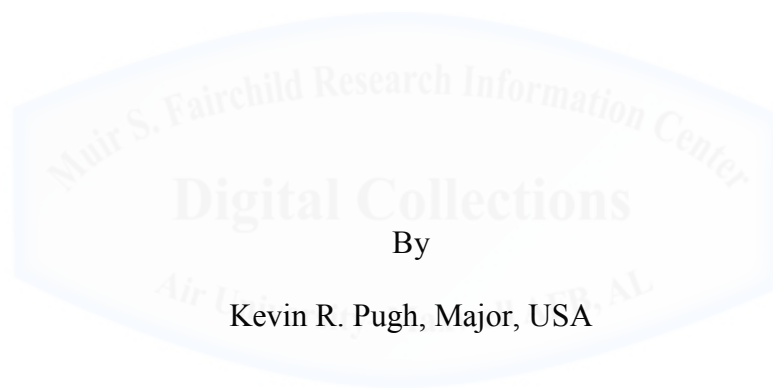


AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**An Analysis of the Strategic Impact of the Campaign in German East Africa during the
First World War**



By

Kevin R. Pugh, Major, USA

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

4 April 2013

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government or the Department of Defense. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 51-303, it is not copyrighted, but is the property of the United States government.

The First World War is considered to have been the first global war. However with millions of soldiers involved in the European theater, many historians consider the campaigns outside of Europe to have been mere sideshows. The campaign in East Africa that pitted the British, French, Belgians and eventually the Portuguese against the Germans was the longest campaign of the war outlasting the armistice by two weeks. The campaign in and of itself had global reach with soldiers, supplies and armaments coming from the continents of Asia, Europe, other parts of Africa and even North America. It is this campaign that will be the focus of the study that follows. Few historians argue over the brilliance at the tactical and operational levels of war when analyzing the German side of the campaign in East Africa. The exploits of the German commander Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck and his colonial soldiers, the Schutztruppe, garner much praise since he held off nearly 160,000 Allied troops with no more than 15,000 troops of his own during the course of the war.¹ However, some historians doubt that the German campaign had any strategic impact at all.² The focus of the research in many books that attempt to answer the strategic question is on manpower and in many cases manpower alone. This narrow analysis may be due to the fact that the British choice of strategy for fighting the campaign in Africa was to do so with almost exclusively colonial or local manpower.³ With that in mind historians such as Hew Strachan argue that the manpower would not have been used in Europe and therefore there was no strategic diversion of forces.⁴ However it appears that it was largely the work of the British Secretary of State for War Herbert Kitchner that prevented more European based British troops from being sent to the theater.⁵ While this policy was predominantly maintained successfully that does not mean that it did not create additional vulnerabilities as well as expenses. A closer look reveals that the campaign was larger than just the men involved in the fighting. The campaign involved much more, such as the money spent

on the fielded forces and supplies, the transport of forces and logistics from multiple continents, the weaponry and early on the naval engagements. The British policy regarding the use of local forces did not prevail on the naval side of matters, where a single German light cruiser based in East Africa tied down as many as 27 British warships that certainly could have been used elsewhere especially at a time when the British Royal Navy was overstretched with numerous competing requirements.⁶ However, the combination of the other facets of the campaign, namely the naval activities and finances but also the logistics, armaments and propaganda efforts, show a strategic impact that exceeds the weight of the manpower and reveals a considerable diversion of resources from not only the European theater but also the Middle East. With comparably minimal land and naval forces the Germans, in each facet of the campaign in East Africa, were able to draw a disproportionately larger response from the Entente for which there were notable strategic repercussions.

The Manpower Debate

The manpower that fought the campaign in East Africa has often been generalized to the point that it is often believed that none of the troops fighting there would have been used in Europe. While it is true that the majority of the troops were Africans in the service of the Entente or German armies, there were more than just European officered African units present. On the British side there were, upon the outbreak of war, about seventy British officers and over 2,300 African colonial troops spread out across British East Africa in companies of the Kings African Rifles.⁷ At peak strength in 1916 the British had over 73,000 soldiers on the payroll from various sources.⁸ The Belgians were more prepared early on and had about 17,000 Africans in uniform at the beginning of the war. They regularly sent officers and non-commissioned officers from Europe totaling 265 and 269 respectively by early 1916.⁹ The Portuguese on the other hand

chose to send the largest contingent of European troops to the East African theater. While they entered the war much later, they were also involved simultaneously on the Western European front and sent about 12,000 Portuguese troops to their colony in present day Mozambique. These soldiers were augmented by about 12,000 African colonial troops.¹⁰ France on the other hand, while not directly involved in the East African campaign, enlisted over 600,000 African soldiers from its colonies and deployed about 134,000 of them to Europe, more than any other great power and interestingly, more than the British used in the entire East African campaign.¹¹ The difference between the French and British in this regard was one of colonial policy. Evidence suggests that the British were simply afraid of arming an excessive number of Africans for fear they might not only use the expertise against them after the war but also expect recognition in the form of independence.¹² Therefore it is hard to argue that these troops could not have been used elsewhere, instead it was actually that the British chose not use them on racial grounds as evidenced by the considerably fewer restrictions placed on the use of Indian forces as well as the troops from the Dominions of Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.

Due to the limited manpower available early on in the campaign the British chose to organize an expeditionary force from India. This was known as Indian Expeditionary Force (IEF) B and it was initially deployed as the basis of an amphibious operation to capture the German port of Tanga in November 1914.¹³ The IEF consisted of about 7,000 Indian Army troops as well as the 1,200 strong all British 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regiment which had the distinction of being the only British regulars to serve throughout the campaign.¹⁴ The quality of the Indian troops were considerably lower compared to those in the two divisions that had already been dispatched to Europe as well as another force being readied for action in the Middle East and this was clearly evidenced by their performance at Tanga.¹⁵ The operation was a disaster and the

force was repulsed and sent back to British East Africa to reorganize and defend the border with the German colony.¹⁶ The German victory at Tanga was strategic in nature as it quickly ended any British hopes of a quick campaign, provided over a year for further German defensive preparations and eventually forced the Entente to commit a disproportionate amount of resources to fully occupy the German colony. Thereafter the British chose to adopt a defensive strategy in East Africa until sufficient forces could be found and organized for offensive operations.¹⁷

With large numbers of Indian troops already in service in Europe, the Middle East as well as East Africa, the British War Office turned to the Dominion of South Africa to reinforce the army in British East Africa in 1916. This was not undertaken until operations in German South West Africa were successfully completed as well as the suppression of a rebellion amongst the Boers in South Africa.¹⁸ At the conclusion of the aforementioned actions, South Africa recruited and trained a force of over 18,000 troops that arrived in British East Africa in March 1916 and formed the basis of the first major British ground offensive of the campaign.¹⁹ A little over a month later, the British forces at Al Kut in Iraq surrendered. Here is the most specific case where on the ground, the British were overextended and that the forces in East Africa may have been needed elsewhere.²⁰ However, disease quickly ravaged the South Africans and it was ultimately withdrawn and eventually sent to Europe. It was replaced by troops from the British colonies in West Africa, a regiment from the British West Indies in Caribbean, two regiments of Indian troops from Europe, two battalions from Rhodesia, as well as newly recruited King's African Rifles regiments.²¹ In the case of the Indian and South African troop commitments, the British also created additional complexity for themselves at the end of the war in that both would end up seeking territory in Africa in recognition of the fighting done by their troops there.²²

The region of East Africa was also unique from a manpower perspective in that pack animals as well as horses did not survive long due to the presence of the tsetse fly. This blood feeding insect carries a parasite that causes what is known as sleeping sickness and cattle disease and once bitten such animals would die shortly thereafter. In the South African Expeditionary Force alone the insect is believed to have been responsible for the deaths of nearly 40,000 oxen 19,000 horses, 10,000 mules and 2,500 donkeys in little over a period of five months.²³ Plagued by the fly, both sides resorted to a huge number of human carriers to distribute supplies. The British alone employed over a million laborers during the campaign. The Belgians recruited about 260,000 while the Portuguese utilized 90,000. An accurate record of figures for the German carriers appears to have not survived the war, but Lettow-Vorbeck states that each company of the Schutztruppe employed an average of 250.²⁴ In the resulting vacuum, historians have been left to speculate; Farwell claims that the number certainly went into the thousands while Paice puts the total at no less than 350,000.²⁵

The German commander's own stated goal was to prevent the British from using their colonial manpower in other theaters of war.²⁶ In the case of Europe he was largely unsuccessful as the South African troops were eventually sent to Europe. However in terms of the Middle East he may have been ultimately successful as the non-Muslim Indian and South African troops may have been equally useful there especially in light of the British defeat at Al Kut. The British situation was also extremely complex with multiple ground and naval operations occurring simultaneously. Throughout much of 1914 and 1915 there were ongoing land actions in the German colonies of Cameroon, South West Africa as well as the Gallipoli landings.²⁷ Furthermore, the naval situation was complicated by the presence of several German cruisers that represented a significant threat to Allied convoys and shipping.

Naval Operations

The naval aspect of the campaign in East Africa deserves considerable analysis. This facet of the campaign drew further disproportionate British naval forces away from other parts of the world with a single German vessel causing a strategic impact. Of all the German naval vessels that were at sea at the outbreak of war, only one, the light cruiser *Königsberg* was based in German East Africa. This vessel was built in 1905, displaced 3,400 tons and had a top speed of 24 knots which was faster than most similar British ships of the time. This vessel would ultimately elude the British fleet for 255 days tying down as many as 27 warships at a cost of over 38,000 tons of coal.²⁸ Even before the outbreak of war in July 1914, the British Admiralty recognized the threat posed by the German cruiser and dispatched the South Africa based Cape Squadron consisting of the cruisers *Hyacinth*, *Astraea* and *Pegasus* to shadow her.²⁹ These ships were quickly employed to follow the *Königsberg*. However on August 1, 1914, four days before the war began, the *Königsberg* slipped her pursuers during a squall.³⁰ Hence, a day after the outbreak of war the *Königsberg* captured the first British merchantman of the war, the 6,600 ton *The City of Winchester*.³¹ Still at large about six weeks later, the *Königsberg* sank a lone British cruiser setting off shockwaves throughout the British Empire with the effects reaching as far as Australia and New Zealand. Having received accurate intelligence that a British cruiser was anchored in the harbor of nearby Zanzibar, the *Königsberg* steamed into range at dawn on the morning of September 20, 1914. The resulting engagement ended with the sinking of the *Pegasus* and the picket ship *Helmut* at a cost of 86 British casualties and not a single German sailor wounded.³² While the loss of the *Pegasus* was not significant for the Royal Navy, it alarmed authorities in Australia and New Zealand as well as heavily influenced public opinion in those Dominions where expeditionary forces were assembling to sail by convoy that would

likely pass through the area adjacent to German East Africa.³³ At the same time news arrived of the loss of three British cruisers in the North Sea to a German U-boat.³⁴ Such timing for the Royal Navy could not have been worse. In fact, the governments of both Dominions protested to the Admiralty and delayed the departure of the convoy until sufficient escorts were provided.³⁵ Troop convoys and escorts were not the only victims. The mere rumored sighting of other German cruisers on the Pacific coast of America “paralyzed shipping from Vancouver to Panama.”³⁶

While the *Königsberg* was not alone, her actions emphasized that British naval power was diluted to such an extent that the *Pegasus* was anchored at Zanzibar without effective nearby support. The Royal Navy was conducting operations simultaneously against the German colonies of Togoland, Cameroon and South West Africa, while covering troop movements from India to East Africa and the Middle East as well as the combined Australian and New Zealander troop convoy. In the same period the Canadians also protested over what they perceived to be inadequate escort for their own troop convoys and departure was here again delayed until sufficient escorts arrived in the form of two older battleships and two cruisers.³⁷ In fact the loss of the *Pegasus* was a direct result of the overextension of the British naval power in the region, with coverage of the Indian Expeditionary forces taking priority at the time. Furthermore, the British governor of Zanzibar as a result of the presence of the *Königsberg*, had requested protection for the harbor.³⁸

Several other German cruisers were also simultaneously drawing the attention of the British Admiralty. In the Pacific, the German Asiatic Squadron had eluded the British and its intentions were vague at best. In addition the German cruisers *Karlsruhe* and *Emden* were likewise still at large. The *Karlsruhe* was in the South Atlantic while the *Emden* was operating in

the Indian Ocean having been detached from the Asiatic Squadron and therefore positioned to also threaten the troop convoys.³⁹ The mere presence of the *Emden* delayed the Australian and New Zealand troop convoy an additional three weeks again until the convoy escort capability was sufficiently further increased in the minds of the local authorities.⁴⁰ At one point this joint convoy was almost rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope due to the presence of the *Königsberg* coupled with the fact that the *Emden* was sighted in an area close to the planned route of the convoy. More troubling for the British Admiralty was the fact that after the sinking of the *Pegasus* they were unable to locate the *Königsberg*. The *Emden* was also quite elusive and together they were considered a threat to almost any British naval operation in the region. Rumored sightings also played havoc on the Admiralty complicating practically every maneuver including the Tanga expedition as well as operations in the Persian Gulf.⁴¹ In nearly every case of an alleged sighting the Admiralty dispatched a cruiser to investigate, and such movements further diluted British naval power.⁴² This overstretching ultimately led to vulnerabilities in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans where the *Karlsruhe* and *Emden* respectively enjoyed their greatest successes against British shipping sinking a combined total of 32 merchant ships with a tonnage of more than 143,000.⁴³ While not a significant amount of all British merchant shipping, the psychological impact was far from insignificant.

After sinking the *Pegasus*, the *Königsberg* sought refuge on the coast of German East Africa in the Rufiji River Delta. Her relatively low draught allowed her to steam far enough up the river that no heavy British warship could reach her, that is if they could even find the vessel. Despite intelligence revealing the location where she was moored, the British were initially unable to locate the position on any maps in their possession.⁴⁴ It was not until an unknown sailor from the British cruiser *Chatham* climbed a tall palm tree in October 1914 that the

Königsberg was sighted.⁴⁵ Inadequate maps forced the British to track down a famed elephant hunter from South Africa who had intimate knowledge of the Rufiji Delta. He was eventually found and sent to reconnoiter the area for the best approach to reach the *Königsberg*.⁴⁶ Despite the hunter's efforts, the British vessels in the region were unable to steam close enough to bombard the German cruiser. Due to the unavailability of low draught vessels, the British resorted to airpower in an attempt to neutralize the *Königsberg*.⁴⁷

The German cruiser represented enough of a threat that the British Royal Navy bought the seaplane of a civilian giving demonstration flights in South Africa, commissioned him as a sub-lieutenant, and shipped his fragile silk covered aircraft to the delta. On the first flight the radiator gave out and the only possible substitute was that on a Model T Ford in Mombassa. So important was the effort that the British dispatched a cruiser to make the 200 mile journey to transport it back.⁴⁸ On the next flight the aircraft was shot down and the pilot captured. The loss prompted the local British admiral to request a squadron of Royal Naval Air Service seaplanes, which owing to the priority of the mission was granted.⁴⁹ However these aircraft were unable to accomplish anything more than reconnaissance owing to their weak engines.⁵⁰ Consequently the British decided instead to blockade the entire coast of German East Africa. However, other commitments such as the Gallipoli landings did not allow for a robust blockading squadron. It was not until February 1915 that sufficient sea power was present with the arrival of the Australian light cruiser *Pioneer* as well as four steam whalers that had been armed and dispatched from South Africa.⁵¹

It in the wake of these early air and naval setbacks, the British Admiralty ordered the destruction of the *Königsberg* at all costs, a message that the ship's wireless operator intercepted.⁵² Further aggravation for the British followed with the loss of the steamer *Adjutant*

that had attempted a reconnaissance up the Rufiji River, provoking the Admiralty to contemplate sending 2,000 Royal Marines to participate in a combined operation to destroy the German cruiser. The idea had actually originated with the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill himself, but with his subordinates already deep in planning the Gallipoli landings they had no marines to spare.⁵³ Churchill and Admiral Herbert King-Hall, the senior Royal Navy officer for the region continuously argued about how next to deal with the *Königsberg*. Frustrated by the fact that this single German cruiser was still at-large, both men came up with their own equally interesting ideas such as a night raid with a row boat armed with a spar torpedo, or even divers attaching charges to the hull, as well as mining as many approaches to the delta as possible. Ultimately these ideas remained only in the minds and correspondence between the two.⁵⁴

Interestingly, it was two monitors that were too late in arriving in the Mediterranean for the Gallipoli operation that ultimately sealed the fate of the *Königsberg*. The monitors *Severn* and *Mersey* had originally been ordered by the Brazilian Navy but were confiscated upon the outbreak of the war by the Royal Navy for use on the Belgian coast. Here they had participated in the successful defense of Calais, Dunkirk and Boulogne. Following a refit, they were on their way to the Dardanelles when it was realized they would be too late to be of use there and instead were towed over 5,000 miles from Malta to the Rufiji Delta arriving in early June 1915. Not only did these vessels possess sufficiently shallow draught, they were also armed with guns larger than those of the *Königsberg*.⁵⁵

At the same time, additional aircraft were also ordered and an airfield constructed on nearby Mafia Island. The British planned to have aircraft not only attempt to bomb the German cruiser but also to direct the gunfire of the monitors. All preparations were complete by early July and the monitors sortied up the river on July 6, 1915. For most of the day the vessels

exchanged salvos with moderate damage received on both sides. The first round ended when the monitors steamed out of range of the *Königsberg*'s guns. A second round began five days later again with effective aerial reconnaissance. This time the monitors continued the action until their fire was accurate. The aircraft played a crucial role in the accuracy of the monitors and by midday the *Königsberg* was a flaming wreck.⁵⁶ Thus the 255 day hunt for the vessel ended with the destruction of the last German cruiser at large.

Much like the monitors, the Royal Navy also sent purpose built gunboats for use on Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika in order to counter makeshift German vessels operating there. The latter required an enormous expenditure in order to wrest control of that body of water from the Germans. This of course followed the lake's designation as an "outlying sphere of British naval power."⁵⁷ The two gunboats were sent by sea to Cape Town from England, then by rail to the Congo. For the final leg they were towed over 150 miles by steam tractors over a road that was built ahead of them, which took six weeks and required the construction of nearly 200 bridges.⁵⁸ Here again a small threat from the Germans consistently drew a disproportionately larger British response.

Financing the Campaign

In comparing the financial impact of the campaign there is hardly any comparison between Germany and the Entente. The Germans largely fought with what they had on hand at the outbreak of war as well as what they captured whereas the British were forced to ship in not only manpower, but armaments and supplies. Of all the facets of the campaign, the best evidence of the strategic impact on the Entente forces is in the finances. The British alone spent £70 million on the East African Campaign which in 2008 was the equivalent of £2.8 billion. This was equal to the entire British defense budget for 1913 or the cost of equipping the entire British

army in 1918. When combined with the Dominions and India the cost soared to nearly £300 million.⁵⁹ Records for German expenditures are incomplete but it is not difficult to propose that the costs of outfitting two blockade runners and an airship pale in comparison. Since they were cut off from Germany for most of the campaign, the African soldiers and carriers were not paid until well after the war was over. Therefore, pay for German and colonial African soldiers in East Africa did not represent a corresponding drain on German war finances. Interestingly, it was not until after the German commander Lettow-Vorbeck's death in 1964 that the German parliament voted to pay off the Schutztruppe.⁶⁰ The British expenditures alone represent the greatest impact of Lettow-Vorbeck's efforts. Such expenditures were a serious drain on the British Treasury, which without significant help from American financiers would have been all but bankrupt three weeks after the American entry into the war in April 1917.⁶¹

Logistics

As previously mentioned the tsetse fly intensely complicated both the movement of supplies as well as multiplied the manpower needs of all the armies involved in the campaign. The carriers, also known as porters, had to be fed themselves. For each carrier, the average load was 60 pounds while the average distance traveled was 24 kilometers. Therefore, by the end of a three week march the carrier would practically consume the load themselves. This created a food dilemma which usually ended in favor of the fighting soldier in terms of calories consumed. However, underfed porters usually ended up sick, dead or deserted and therefore had to be replaced, leading to the cycle constantly repeating itself with estimated British carrier casualty figures alone reaching over 100,000, many of them succumbing to disease.⁶²

Considerable British shipping capacity was dedicated to supplying the forces in East Africa since the Dominions provided the majority of the supplies. Indian troops were supplied

from India, while British, Rhodesian and South African troops were supplied from South Africa.⁶³ With few exceptions, all supplies came in by sea in the holds of a British merchant fleet that was eventually also overextended due to losses at the hands of German U-boats. Notably in mid-1917, these losses occurred when British forces in East Africa still approached 80,000 in ration strength.⁶⁴

Upon the outbreak of war there were nearly no artillery pieces on either side located in the region. Despite their heavy involvement in Europe and the Middle East, the British in late 1915 shipped in four artillery batteries, a company of armored cars as well as a company of trucks.⁶⁵ In order to arm the influx of soldiers arriving in East Africa in early 1916, the British searched the globe for weapons, shipping in 11,000 rifles from far away Hong Kong.⁶⁶ The fly problem was enough that an order for 100 Ford trucks was approved and they were shipped from England in September 1916.⁶⁷ Belgian troops were supplied and armed exclusively from Europe. Despite the majority of their home country being overrun, they somehow shipped over 16,000 rifles, 24 pieces of artillery along with 115,000 shells to their forces in the Congo.⁶⁸

The Germans on the other hand were almost completely cut off from their home country. However a couple of blockade runners did manage to slip through and their impact was substantial. The first was the *Kronborg* which arrived in early April 1915. Recognizing the potential of prolonging the campaign, the voyage had been authorized by the German Admiralty following the victory at Tanga.⁶⁹ Its purpose was twofold; resupply both Lettow-Vorbeck and the *Königsberg*. The ship was carrying 1,000 shells for the *Königsberg*, 1,800 modern Mauser rifles with three million rounds of ammunition, two 60mm artillery pieces, six machine guns and tons of dynamite, medicine and tinned food.⁷⁰ Despite being intercepted close to shore and being nearly completely destroyed above the waterline by a British cruiser, the majority of its cargo

was later salvaged by the Germans, a fact that caused considerable embarrassment for the British admiral in charge of the region. The salvage job was an operation in and of itself employing as many 3,000 personnel. In one day recorded by the harbormaster 239 rifles, 375,000 rounds of ammunition, four machine guns and 250 artillery shells were recovered.⁷¹ It was not until the British picked up spent German shell cases with 1915 stamps that they realized the cargo had been salvaged.⁷² This vessel arrived at a critical time when the front was largely stagnant and the captured supplies that the German commander would eventually live on were not yet available in large quantities. The second vessel, the *Marie von Stettin* arrived about a year later after a supply request had been smuggled secretly out of Portuguese East Africa. This time the vessel arrived initially unscathed and the contents were quickly distributed since they were already perfectly packed in 60 pound packages for the carriers.⁷³

The final German resupply attempt was via Zeppelin. Preparations began in June 1917 and by November the airship was ready. It had a cargo of fifteen tons of weapons, medical supplies and ammunition. However, on November 24, 1917 as the airship was passing over the Egyptian coast it was ordered to turn back by Berlin owing to the deteriorating situation on the ground in East Africa.⁷⁴ This was not a serious blow for the Germans since by this time they found themselves well supplied from the poorly defended depots of Portuguese East Africa. In fact, one officer recorded in his diary that they were never better supplied during the entire campaign.⁷⁵ There is no better evidence of the comparatively limited German investment in supplying the campaign than in the equipment that the Germans surrendered with on November 25, 1918: 30 British machine guns, a Portuguese artillery piece and over 1,000 rifles of British and Portuguese origin.⁷⁶ The German investment when compared to that of the Allies was

miniscule, and in the end the German commanding officer Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck multiplied the small supply efforts with his tactical proficiency on the battlefield.

Jihad and Propaganda

Another dimension of the campaign that required a limited investment by Germany but caused substantial potential for trouble for the British was the Ottoman declaration of Jihad in November 1914. While it did not originate from German East Africa, nor were substantial efforts to exploit it undertaken by Lettow-Vorbeck or the German colonial administration, they certainly benefited from the action even if only indirectly. An order as simple as flying the crescent flag over all German forts in the colony, which the German Governor of East Africa Heinrich Schnee enacted following the declaration, did enough to raise fear in the surrounding colonies of the Entente. Less than a year later, five Africans carrying a Muslim flag were caught in Portuguese East Africa with a substantial amount of dynamite on their way to blow up a frontier post. Such fear was substantial since there were large numbers of Muslims in the British colonies not only as a whole but in East Africa and Somaliland as well. In fact, there were almost 100 million throughout the British Empire, nearly half of the total world population at that time.⁷⁷ The British also had to deal with desertion and mutiny in Indian army units that were predominantly Muslim. Two of the regiments that mutinied which were based in Singapore were actually sent later to East Africa in order to redeem themselves.⁷⁸

Fears again materialized in Egypt when in early 1916 5,000 Sanusi tribesmen answered the call of Jihad and invaded Egypt from Libya. This invasion forced the British to send South African troops at the same time they were sending other forces to East Africa. While the operation to re-secure Egypt was short in duration it represented yet another diversion of British resources that cost the Germans very little. At much the same time, the Mad Mullah, Sayyid

Mohammed Adbille Hassan and his 6,000 followers were tying down British and Indian troops in British Somaliland. Further complicating matters, the ruler of Abyssinia Lij Iyasu announced his conversion to Islam in 1916. This coupled with all the other activities already mentioned, and coming in a country that had been Christian since the fourth century was a “bombshell” for the British.⁷⁹ Even more potent was the fact that Abyssinia was more than capable of fielding an army of over 100,000 armed men and had defeated an Italian invasion force within the last twenty years. However, despite the considerable clandestine efforts of the Germans and Ottomans to bring Abyssinia into the war including the dispatch of a team of agents that were ultimately intercepted by the British and Italians, Iyasu was deposed in October 1916. In the end, the British prevailed in the propaganda struggle when they captured a circular signed by Heinrich Schnee that ordered the counteraction of the spread of Islamic propaganda. The British wasted no time in distributing this throughout the region. While the desired effect may not have been fully achieved it certainly called into question the true nature of Germany’s support for Jihad.⁸⁰

In conclusion, what began as a relatively small operation to occupy the colony of German East Africa quickly mushroomed into a campaign with global reach that lasted longer than the war in Europe and ultimately was far more than a little sideshow of the Great War. While it did not divert huge numbers of men from Europe, it did cause the British to overextend themselves both on the ground and at sea until German East Africa had been largely overrun and the destruction of the *Königsberg* had been achieved. Lettow-Vorbeck’s success can be attributed at least indirectly to the British defeat at Al Kut and the threat of the *Königsberg* indirectly created conditions that enabled the other German cruisers still at large to create havoc at the British Admiralty and throughout most of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. While the tonnage sunk represented a small portion of the British merchant fleet, the resulting hysteria in public

opinion especially in the Dominions is unquantifiable. Such themes are consistent throughout the history of the campaign in East Africa. Small German investments required comparably enormous counteraction by the Allied forces in terms of men, material and money. The chief diversions were money and naval power both of which were in short supply when they were needed most. Much like the *Königsberg*, as long as Lettow-Vorbeck and his Schutztruppe remained in existence, he forced the British, Belgians and Portuguese to maintain a correspondingly disproportionate capability to deal with him. In this he was ultimately successful and consequently he succeeded in diverting enough resources that his actions did have a strategic impact on the war.

¹ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 183.

² Strachan, *The First World War*, 83-84.

³ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 134.

⁶ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 158.

⁷ Abbott, *Armies in East Africa*, 8.

⁸ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 135.

⁹ Hordern, *Military Operations East Africa*, 400; Abbott, *Armies in East Africa*, 10.

¹⁰ Abbott, *Armies in East Africa*, 11;13.

¹¹ Strachan, *The First World War*, 81; Stevenson, *Cataclysm*, 162.

¹² Abbott, *Armies in East Africa*, 16; Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 2.

¹³ Abbott, *Armies in East Africa*, 13.

¹⁴ Abbott, *Armies in East Africa*, 13; Hordern, *Military Operations East Africa*, 530.

¹⁵ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 106.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 108-111.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁸ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 128-129.

¹⁹ Hordern, *Military Operations East Africa*, 216.

²⁰ Strachan, *The First World War*, 124-125.

²¹ Strachan, *The First World War*, 91-95; Abbott, *Armies in East Africa*, 37.

²² Samson, *Britain, South Africa and the East African Campaign*, 134.

²³ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 305-306.

²⁴ Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa*, 22.

²⁵ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 110; Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 398.

²⁶ Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa*, 2.

²⁷ Abbott, *Armies in East Africa* 16.

²⁸ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 127;158.

²⁹ Hordern, *Military Operations East Africa*, 20.

³⁰ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 129.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

³² *Ibid.*, 133.

³³ Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I*, 85.

-
- ³⁴ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 37.
³⁵ Ibid., 69.
³⁶ Ibid., 80.
³⁷ Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I*, 86-87.
³⁸ Corbett Vol I, 307-309
³⁹ Strachan WW 76-77.
⁴⁰ Corbett, *Naval Operations, Volume I* 314.
⁴¹ Ibid., 390-391.
⁴² Ibid., 307-309.
⁴³ Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I*, 70;76;79.
⁴⁴ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 12.
⁴⁵ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 135.
⁴⁶ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 86-87.
⁴⁷ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 135.
⁴⁸ Ibid.
⁴⁹ Ibid., 137.
⁵⁰ Ibid., 138.
⁵¹ Corbett, *Naval Operations, Volume II*, 238-239.
⁵² Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 143.
⁵³ Corbett, *Naval Operations, Volume II*, 238-239; Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 87.
⁵⁴ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 87
⁵⁵ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 145-148.
⁵⁶ Ibid., 151-157.
⁵⁷ Newbolt, *Naval Operations, Volume IV*, 81-82.
⁵⁸ Ibid.
⁵⁹ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 3.
⁶⁰ Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa*, 318-319; Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 357.
⁶¹ Stevenson, *Cataclysm*, 186.
⁶² Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 5-7; 183.
⁶³ Hordern, *Military Operations East Africa*, 217
⁶⁴ Strachan, *The First World War*, 291; Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 310.
⁶⁵ Hordern *Military Operations East Africa*, 216; Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 10.
⁶⁶ Hordern, *Military Operations East Africa*, 217.
⁶⁷ Ibid., 394
⁶⁸ Ibid., 400.
⁶⁹ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 180.
⁷⁰ Ibid., 139.
⁷¹ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 92.
⁷² Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 142.
⁷³ Ibid., 276-277.
⁷⁴ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 347-349.
⁷⁵ Farwell, *The Great War in Africa*, 342.
⁷⁶ Ibid., 354.
⁷⁷ Strachan, *The First World War*, 99.
⁷⁸ Paice, *World War I The African Front*, 212-213.
⁷⁹ Ibid., 217-218.
⁸⁰ Ibid., 222-223.

Bibliography

- Abbot, Peter. *Armies in East Africa, 1914-1918*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002.
- Corbett, Julian S. *Naval Operations, Volume I (Text)*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1920.
- Corbett, Julian S. *Naval Operations, Volume II (Text & Maps)*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1920.
- Farwell, Byron. *The Great War in Africa*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986.
- Frothingham, Thomas G. *The Naval History of the World War, Offensive Operations 1914-1915*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924.
- Frothingham, Thomas G. *The Naval History of the World War, The Stress of Seapower 1915-1916*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925.
- Halpern, Paul G. *A Naval History of World War I*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994.
- Hordern, Charles. *Military Operations East Africa*. Nashville: The Battery Press, 1990.
- Hoyt, Edwin P. *Guerilla: Colonel von Lettow-Vorbeck and Germany's East African Empire*. New York: Macmillan, 1981.
- Jones, Nigel. "The Unexpected Guerilla." *Military History*, November 2008. 40-49.
- Lettow-Vorbeck, Paul Emil von. *My Reminiscences of East Africa*. Forgotten Books, 2012.
- Nahorniak, Michael, P. Michael Phillips and Dale C. Rielage. "Foozling Tanga: The Failed British Amphibious Operation in German East Africa, 1914." *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 86, No. 10 (October 2002): 48-54.
- Newbolt, Henry. *Naval Operations, Volume IV (Text)*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1928.
- Paice, Edward. *World War I, The African Front*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2008.
- Pradhan, S.D. *Indian Army in East Africa*. New Delhi, India: National Book Organisation, 1991.
- Rooney, David. "A German Guerrilla Chief in Africa." *History Today*, Vol. No. (November 1999): 28-34.
- Samson, Anne. *Britain, South Africa and the East African Campaign, 1914-1918*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006.
- Stevenson, David. *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy*. New York: Basic Books, 2004.
- Strachan, Hew. *The First World War*. New York: Penguin Group, 2004.
- Strachan, Hew. *The First World War in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Weir, William. *Soldiers in the Shadows*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2002.